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CIA Chief Not Happy Revealing His Budget

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The nation's intelligence agencies are prepared — at President Carter's prodding — to say how much they cost taxpayers each year, but CIA Director Stansfield Turner and two predecessors don't think much of the idea.

For one thing, they said yesterday, it has never been done before. And, for another, it might help enemy agents get a fix on U.S. spy efforts.

Turner, a Navy admiral who oversees all U.S. intelligence as well as directing the CIA, told the Senate Intelligence Committee Carter ordered him to reveal the overall budget of the U.S. spy network if asked by Congress.

"I CAME HERE today not to release the figures," Turner said, "that's up to you."

Turner said he was reluctant to do it, and told the panel a good look at the intelligence budget can, over a period of time, provide interested observers an understanding of "technologies on which we depend most."

The CIA budget has been estimated unofficially at \$750 million a year and estimates of the total budget for all agencies, including the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency and others have reached as high as \$4 billion to \$7 billion.

In another development, Turner announced he had discharged two agents guilty of "unauthorized" work for an alleged international arms merchant.

Turner said they were trying to "do a favor for an old friend who happened to be a former CIA employe."

On the budget question, two of Turner's predecessors, William Colby, CIA chief from 1973 to 1976, and Richard Helms, 1966 to 1973, backed his opposition to the disclosure idea.

COLBY, WHO LEFT the agency amid controversy involving allegations of illegal CIA operations, opposed the idea because it would be "unwise for our nation to be the first in the world to reveal its intelligence budget."

Helms said he once saw nothing wrong with disclosure, but had since changed his mind.

The figure, whatever it is, Helms said, would drop on the public like "a dull thud" because there would be no point of reference to judge whether it was a high or low amount.

Yet Turner said he realized a compromise on the disclosure issue was necessary to permit public understanding of the intelligence process.

"Accordingly," he said, "President Carter has directed that I not object to your releasing to the public, the single overall budget figure of the U.S. intelligence community."



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CIA Director Stansfield Turner testifying.